



FLU VACCINE HELPS PROTECT FAMILY MEMBERS AND YOU

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FALLS CHURCH, Va. – With the flu season upon us, Navy Medicine is stressing the importance of medical readiness for Sailors, Marines and their family members this fall.

Force Master Chief Hosea Smith, Hospital Corps director, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, and Navy Medicine leaders received their flu shots early in the season to set the example and encourage Sailors and Marines to be proactive.

“The flu can have a significant impact on our readiness,” said Smith. “It is essential that all our Sailors, Marines and families get their flu shot. It’s the best way to reduce the chance of infection and protect ourselves and the ones we love.”

The flu is a contagious virus that changes from one flu season to the next. This seasonal flu vaccine, which is mandatory for all Department of Defense (DoD) uniform personnel who are not medically or administratively exempt, protects against the strains of influenza expected to be most common during the upcoming season. This season, the DoD provides vaccines made to protect against four flu viruses.

“This virus is a force reducer and can cause a Sailor, Marine or family member to be bedridden for more than a week,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jaime Vega. “The vaccine is a tool to strengthen the health and safety of the military and our community.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website, the height of flu season is December through February. Early action by Sailors, Marines and families should be taken to minimize the spread of the flu through the community and household.

"Children younger than two years old, adults over 65 years old, pregnant women and people with asthma or weakened immune systems are also more susceptible," said Vega. "Full immunity could take up to two weeks for the body to make the antibodies that protect against the flu and these groups are generally the most affected."

In addition to receiving the vaccine, military members and families should take a preventative approach to minimize the spread of the flu while at home.

"The first important preventive measure is always wash your hands, especially when in a communal area," said Vega. "The second most important is to distance yourself if you do contract the flu, because doing this will lessen the amount of person-to-person contact and minimize the spread of the contagion."

For more information on the seasonal flu and how to protect yourself and your family, visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

Navy Medicine is a global health care network of 63,000 personnel that provides health care support to the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, their families and veterans in high operational tempo environments at expeditionary medical facilities, medical treatment facilities, hospitals, clinics, hospital ships and research units around the world.

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